

Faculty Training for Two-Way Distance Learning

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Elements of Successful Distance Education TV Instructors

Distance education instructors of necessity must be master teachers. They must understand and model principles from the literature on effective teaching and know how to best use technology to convey their teaching. In this respect, much can be learned from broadcast journalism -- that is, noting how TV anchors look directly into the camera, are precise and articulate in their selection of words, and support their presentations with a high level of visual content.

Distance teaching pedagogy also requires "forced" interaction between teacher and students, a slower pace of instruction, and clear logical presentations. The teacher needs to ask a lot of questions to ascertain if students understand and to keep them actively involved in the instructional process.

Successful teaching in a distance education mode requires much more than a pretty or handsome face in a "talking head syndrome." Teachers must adopt new methods and strategies that actively involve their remote students. Thoughts to consider in any training program include:

- ✓ **Questioning Skills:** Questions to learners should be preplanned and range from low order (recall or knowledge) to higher order (synthesis, analysis, problem solving).
- ✓ **"Force" interaction with students:** The teacher needs to ask a lot of questions to "force" interaction with students. Also, after posing a question, the teacher should allow sufficient "wait-time" for students to process information before answering. The use of a student name before asking the question may be necessary to allow the technical facilitators to "switch-up" the site so all students can see the student answering or asking a question.
- ✓ **Involvement of students:** Efforts should be made to involve all learners in class activities. Calling students by name to participate in class discussions will personalize lessons as well as notify students that they are each responsible to participate as active learners. Directed questions to a specific student(s) can be an effective approach in gaining more student participation. The instructor might also maintain a log, by student name, of who is participating and who is not. This can be used as a record to help remind the teacher to call upon noncontributing members in the class or to more equitably distribute teacher-student interactions.

- ✓ **Clear teacher articulation:** The instructor must articulate clearly and distinctly. Verbal instructions from the teacher must be precise and explicit. Too much teacher-talk, especially if the teacher is rambling, can cause confusion. Also, a voice that portrays enthusiasm, variety in tone, and diversity in pace will do much to maintain student interest.
- ✓ **Use variety to involve students:** Watching the TV screen for a long period of time without interaction or involvement from students can be "deadly." Brief teacher lectures (no more than 10 - 15 minutes) interspersed with questions can work well. Other student involvement activities might include small-group work, dyad discussions, cooperative learning tasks, student presentations, discussions between students at two or more different sites, polling of students to seek their opinions or ideas, etc.

Learner Responsibilities In Distance Education Settings

For most students, learning at a distance is a new experience and one they will need to adapt to. Suggestions for student to help insure student success include:

- ✓ Distance students must be assertive. This means: If you have a question during class, speak up. At first, it may seem like you are forcing yourself on the instructor or that you are being rude because you are interrupting. Courteously say, "I have a questions" or "May I make a comment?"
- ✓ Sit near the microphone and the TV monitor at your site for two reasons -- (1) so you can see and hear the instructor, and (2) so the instructor can see and hear you when you interact.
- ✓ Get to know other students at your site. Much of the learning that occurs in class is "informal learning" between you and your classmates.
- ✓ Be aware of any home TV viewing habits that may interfere with your experience in the distance learning class. Watching television at home is a VERY different activity than watching and participating in a TV class. Many people at home watch TV while they are doing something else (e.g. eating, sewing, paying bills, reading, etc.) Or they may watch TV to "unwind" or relax. Participation in an interactive TV class requires that you interact. Students must stay focused, ask questions (talk to the TV teacher and classmates), share ideas, etc. Students must be active, not passive learners.
- ✓ Contact the instructor by telephone during his/her office hours if you have questions that cannot be answered during the interactive class time.

Teaching on two-way TV systems demands that instructors involve learners and optimize the use of the medium. In addition, learners must be more than passive "watchers" of instruction.